

## A Pile of Portraits

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Summary: Of all the portraits in Clarke's drawer, there's only one that really matters. And it's not Lexa's. [This is supposed to be the equivalent to "A Pile of Ashes" from Clarke's POV.]

## A Pile of Portraits

When she was drawing, Clarke thought about home.

Drawing was her own way of remembering the things she loved, even if they were far away from her. It was a way of reaching out for the unreachable; a way of fighting the loneliness and desperation whenever she felt completely out of place.

Maybe that's why she'd been drawing so much in her cell on the Ark. She'd drawn all kinds of stuff; flashes of the life that had been taken away from her, but also images of the Earth and the life she liked to dream up for herself – a life she could've had if it weren't for the irresponsibility of her ancestors.

Since her arrest, however, Clarke had never stopped drawing. From the moment she first set foot on Earth, it seemed like the only thing to keep her sane. There'd been all that trouble with Bellamy; then the war against Anya's people and the Mountain Men – and now Lexa's death, leaving her alone in a place where she clearly didn't belong.

Clarke knew that it had been the right thing to stay in Polis, and she didn't regret it. After all, she'd done it for her people; to make sure that Lexa would hold her promise and keep them safe. And even though she'd never been happy here, even though there wasn't a day when she didn't fantasize about leaving, Lexa had always been her reason to stay.

Until Titus shot her.

Two hours had passed since it happened, and Clarke's urge to run away was growing stronger by the second. Technically, she was free to leave whenever she wanted â€" she'd been here as a guest, not a prisoner. But part of her knew that leaving wouldn't change anything. It wasn't a matter of distance; even from the other side of the planet, Lexa's death would still be painful.

\_Seems like this is revenge\_, a small voice in her head seemed to say. \_So it's true after all: Blood \_must\_ have blood.\_

"No", Clarke whispered to herself. "That's never been true." But her grasp around the pencil involuntarily tightened, and the knuckles on her right hand slowly turned white.

\_Blood must have blood \_wasn't\_ the right way. No matter how you looked at it, things would always end in a bloodbath.

And Clarke knew that's what would've happened if Lexa had sent out her warriors to take revenge on Skaikru. The people at Arkadia had been through enough, and it was Clarke's responsibility to stop their suffering once and for all. That was the promise she made to herself when she'd decided to stay in Polis â€" to keep her people safe no matter what.

On her first night in Polis, Clarke had asked Lexa for paper and a pencil. The desired items had arrived at her door within an hour, and so she started drawing every single face of those she'd left behind, one by one, until the sun appeared on the horizon and bathed the whole room in golden light.

Clarke kept all the portraits in the drawer next to her bed, as a reminder of her promise. Now when she opened the drawer, she would see all the people who were waiting for her at Arkadia; all the people she didn't want to get hurt.

And there were many of them, a whole stack of paper, but only one that really mattered. The last one.

Bellamy.

Drawing him had been surprisingly easy. She hadn't even realized that she knew his features inside out, but then the pencil seemed to create the lines all by itself and the result looked so much like the real person that Clarke actually lost herself in his eyes for a little while.

Lexa's face was very different, though, and required a lot more concentration. In fact, Clarke was so focused on getting all the lines right that she didn't even hear the knock on her door.

"Hey, can I come in?"

Startled by the sound of Octavia's voice, Clarke looked up from her drawing. "Oh. Yes, of course."

Octavia closed the door behind her and made her way over to the bed, cautiously peering over Clarke's shoulder.

"Something looks off, doesn't it?" Clarke murmured, staring at the paper again. "I think it's the eyes."

Octavia shrugged. "Looks fine to me. Pretty little face she had."

After taking a deep breath, Clarke finally put pencil and paper down. "I suppose you heard what happened?"

"I did. Titus sent a messenger to make us turn around."

"That's good."

Octavia nodded, her gaze wandering over to the windows. It was fascinating how small everything seemed from this height; the people of Polis as small as ants.

"I think you should come back with me, Clarke", Octavia said without looking at her. "Indra thinks it's going to get dangerous around here very soon. She told me to get you and leave before anyone can hold you responsible for this."

Clarke shook her head. "That's ridiculous. I'm \_not \_responsible."

"I know that. But does everyone else?" When Octavia turned away from the windows, she seemed concerned. There were wrinkles on her forehead that Clarke had never seen before, and a kind of worry in her eyes that usually had something to do with her brother.

"I can't leave, okay?" Clarke began to explain, but Octavia cut her off.

"Just think about it, Clarke! Don't get yourself in trouble. I'm serious."

"Actually, I think I can handle a bit of trouble! And I'm not running away again."

Much to her surprise, Octavia went straight to her drawer and pulled out the stack of portraits that were crammed in there.

"This is not just about \_you â€" \_it's about all of them. Abby is worried about you, okay? And if she knew what happened tonightâ€"|" Octavia tried to find the right words, but eventually trailed off.

"Put those away", Clarke said, reaching for the papers in Octavia's hand. "How did you even know about them?"

"What about Bellamy? Isn't that his face?"

Clarke didn't know why, but when Octavia held up his portrait, she stopped.

Looking at his drawing had always been different. There'd always been another image that seemed to push itself in front of this one: \_Mount Weather. His hand on top of hers, pulling the lever.\_

It was that image she would see in her worst nightmares, and it was President Wallace's voice that spoke to her then, telling her that all she'd ever done was causing death.

And why would anyone want her back at Arkadia when she was only getting people killed?

"He wants you back", Octavia said as if she'd read her thoughts. "He needs you, Clarke. He's changed and you might be the only one who can fix him."

"Bellamy?" His name slipped out before Clarke could do anything about it. "That's bullshit. I can't fix \_anyone.\_"

Of all the people on this planet, Clarke considered herself the last one who'd be able to help Bellamy. He probably didn't even wanna see her, after she'd left him at the gates of Camp Jaha just like that.

The simple sound of his name was like being stabbed in the heart, sending invisible waves of pain throughout her entire body.

\_This is why I left him behind, \_she thought. \_This is why I need to forget about him.\_

"You can at least give it a try", Octavia insisted. "You have to forget about Lexa and be there for those who need you, Clarke. Just like my brother has always been there for you."

She was right, of course. Bellamy had done so much for her. More than once did he risk his own life to do what she had asked of him " for the good of their people, but also for her.

Even at Mount Weather, he hadn't backed down. He'd stood by her side and put his hand on top of hers when it was time to make a decision. He had pulled that lever \_with her. \_He had ended all those innocent lives \_with her\_, like an unspoken promise to share the responsibility and the pain.

And Bellamy had been willing to keep his end of the bargain, but she'd never given him the chance. She'd run away and left him behind, because she'd been so terrified of seeing those faces every day, the faces of \_her \_people, accusing her for what she did. It had been a coward's way out, really. Hiding from her responsibilities and the aftermath of her own actions.

But all this time, Clarke had never thought about Bellamy " about what she did to him by leaving the camp. They'd done this together, so technically he was just as guilty as her. Part of her must've known that. And still, she'd let him face all the consequences on his own. With her gone, Bellamy had been the one exclusively responsible for the events of Mount Weather, and all he could do was take over that responsibility. Someone had to do it, right?

The thing was, they should've done it \_together\_, but she'd bailed on him. Everything she'd been too afraid to do, everything she'd run away from, Bellamy had to handle on his own.

Clarke really owed him more than she'd believed.

"I never meant to do that to him", she said quietly, staring at the portrait in Octavia's hands. "I just wanted to get away, but I didn't understand" I never thought about" She shook her head.

"Well, he's been holding up quite good", Octavia replied. "Until the second attack at Mount Weather, that is. You gotta come back with me, Clarke, and make up for your mistakes. You help my brother out of this and everything will be forgiven, okay?"

Forgiveness. That's what they'd always needed the most â€" it's what she needed now, because she wanted Bellamy back at her side.

But Clarke wasn't prepared to leave this place so abruptly. After all, she'd been lying in Lexa's bed a good three hours ago, wondering what it would be like to stay here forever. For the first time in weeks, she'd been happy, hadn't she? It would be disrespectful to leave and go back to her people at the first opportunity. She'd be doing the same mistake again: running away from her feelings for Lexa, from everything that scared her.

"I can't", Clarke said simply, her eyes locked on Octavia's. "The people here took me in as their guest and it would be rude to â€" "

"Seriously?" Octavia cut her off. "Clarke, I know that this is hard on you, I really do. Lexa just died and there was obviously \_something \_going on between the two of you, but I'm begging you to remember where your loyalties lie! Bellamy has always been there when you needed him, whereas Lexaâ€¦ Every time we relied on her, we got disappointed. \_You \_got disappointed. That's not love, isn't it?"

Clarke had been wondering for a while about this connection between Lexa and her, but she had to admit that she'd never thought of it as \_love. \_Or maybe she'd just never had the guts to call it that way.

However, the word seemed to trigger something deep inside of her, and when she lowered her gaze once again to the portrait in Octavia's hands, she was slowly beginning to understand it.

"Are you saying thatâ€¦?" Clarke began, struggling to find the right words. "You think that if I'm not in love with Lexa, I might beâ€¦?"

"In love with someone else", Octavia finished her sentence. "Yes, I think so."

And everything she said was making perfect sense, Clarke realized. So she might as well be right with that last assumption.

Maybe it hadn't been Lexa. Maybe it had been somebody else this entire time, and Lexa had been nothing more than an illusion. This had never been about her. She'd put Clarke under her spell because she'd been close, and everyone else wasn't. Everyone Clarke cared about was miles away from here, at Arkadia â€" including him.

"Bellamy", Clarke whispered.

She looked at his portrait, then up at Octavia. She didn't even have to wait for an answer; suddenly, it all seemed as plain as day to her. It was him. Maybe it had been him from the very beginning, and

that's why she'd never had a chance with anybody else.

So it was pretty clear what she had to do next, wasn't it?

"I guess I'mâ€¦ I'm coming with you."

Octavia nodded approvingly. "I knew you'd figure it out. It was just a matter of time. Lexa is dead, and you gotta look at the future now, Clarke. You didn't love her."

Clarke waited for her to continue, but she didn't. And she didn't need to.

Even if Octavia didn't say them, the words were there, hanging in the air like wafts of mist, and Clarke could hear them very clearly.

\_You never loved Lexa.\_

\_You love Bellamy.\_

End  
file.